

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently Amended) A suture separation and organization device for use in organizing and separating tensioned suture strands in a desired spaced-apart orientation during joint repair surgery, comprising:

a body having a first surface that is oriented toward a graft tensioning device when in use and second surface that is oriented toward a bone tunnel in a patient's leg when in use, the body having a center and a perimeter;

a plurality of attachment passages or recesses in said body for releasably attaching said body to a graft tensioning device during use, each passage or recess being sized and positioned so as to ~~at least partially~~ slidably receive therein a corresponding post of a graft tensioning device, each of said attachment passages or recesses being defined by a respective hollow post guide projecting from said second surface of said body so as to maintain space between a patient's leg and said second surface of said body when said suture separation and organization device is in use;

a first plurality of upper suture retention recesses or protrusions disposed on an upper perimeter of said body and a second plurality of lower retention recesses or protrusions disposed on a lower perimeter of said body, said first and second pluralities of suture retention recesses or protrusions being adapted to retain a plurality of tensioned suture strands or groups of tensioned suture strands extending away from a bone tunnel in a desired spaced-apart relationship on either side of the bone tunnel in order to facilitate insertion of an interference screw between the tensioned suture strands; and

a passageway or recess passing through the center of said body through which an interference screw can be inserted between tensioned suture strands during joint repair surgery.

30. (Previously Presented) A suture separation and organization device as defined in claim 29, said first surface of said body being substantially flat.

31. (Previously Presented) A suture separation and organization device as defined in claim 29, wherein each respective hollow post guide projects orthogonally from said second surface of said body.

32. (Currently Amended) A suture separation and organization device as defined in claim 29, wherein the device includes ~~four~~ a pair of suture retention recesses or protrusions and a pair of lower suture retention recesses or protrusions being positioned so as to separate and organize four suture strands or groups of suture strands into four spaced-apart quadrants, said pair of upper suture retention recesses or protrusions being spaced apart and positioned so as to provide a first spacing distance between a pair of corresponding upper sutures, said pair of lower suture retention recesses or protrusions being spaced apart and positioned so as to provide a second spacing distance between a pair of corresponding lower sutures that is substantially equal to the first spacing distance.

33. (Currently Amended) A tensioning system for use in joint repair surgery, comprising:

a suture separation and organization device according to claim 29; and

a graft tensioning device configured so as to apply a desired tensile load to one or more soft tissue grafts emerging from a bone tunnel in a patient's limb and attached to a plurality of suture strands that extend away from the bone tunnel, said graft tensioning device including a plurality of posts designed so as to be slidably receivable through said attachment passages or recesses in said body of said suture separation and organization device.

34. (Previously Presented) A tensioning system for use in joint repair surgery according to claim 32, said graft tensioning device having adjustable tensioning means for selectively varying a tensile load applied to a plurality of suture strands attached to a soft tissue graft positioned within a bone tunnel and that extend away from the bone tunnel.

35. (Currently Amended) A tensioning system for applying variable tension to a plurality of suture strands attached to a soft tissue graft positioned within a bone tunnel and for organizing the suture strands preparatory to fastening the soft tissue graft within the bone tunnel, the tensioning system comprising:

a graft tensioning device having adjustable tensioning means for selectively varying a tensile load applied to a plurality of suture strands attached to a soft tissue graft positioned within a bone tunnel and that extend away from the bone tunnel and means for removably attaching said graft tensioning device to a suture separation and organization device; and

a suture separation and organization device comprising:

body means for providing a structure for the suture separation and organization device;

attachment means for removably attaching said body means to said graft tensioning device;

a first plurality of upper suture retention recesses or protrusions disposed on an upper perimeter of said body means and a second plurality of lower retention recesses or protrusions disposed on a lower perimeter of said body means, ~~said first and second pluralities of upper and lower~~ suture retention recesses or protrusions being adapted to retain a plurality of tensioned suture strands or groups of tensioned suture strands extending away from a bone tunnel in a desired spaced-apart relationship on either side of the bone tunnel in order to facilitate insertion of an interference screw between the tensioned suture strands, said upper suture retention recesses or protrusions being spaced apart and positioned so as to provide a first spacing distance between a pair of corresponding upper sutures, said lower suture retention recesses or protrusions being spaced apart and positioned so as to provide a second spacing distance between a pair of corresponding lower sutures that is substantially equal to the first spacing distance; and

a passageway or recess in said body means through which an interference screw can be inserted.

36. (Previously Presented) A tensioning system as defined in claim 35, said body means comprising a body having a first surface that is oriented toward a graft tensioning device when in use and second surface that is oriented toward a bone tunnel in a patient's leg when in use.

37. (Previously Presented) A tensioning system as defined in claim 36, said first surface of said body being substantially flat.

38. (Currently Amended) A tensioning system as defined in claim 36, said passageway or recess passing through a center of said body and being substantially cylindrical.

39. (Currently Amended) A tensioning system as defined in claim 36, said attachment means for removably attaching said body means to said graft tensioning device comprising a plurality of attachment passages or recesses in said body, each being sized and positioned so as to ~~at least partially~~ slidably receive therein a corresponding post of said graft tensioning device, said post comprising said means for removably attaching said graft tensioning device to a suture separation and organization device.

40. (Previously Presented) A tensioning system as defined in claim 39, each of said attachment passages or recesses being defined by a respective hollow post guide projecting from said second surface of said body so as to maintain space between a patient's leg and said second surface of said body when said suture separation and organization device is in use.

41. (Previously Presented) A tensioning system as defined in claim 35, said body means comprising:

a first elongate body comprising a gripping head at one end and a chiseled end opposite said gripping head that facilitates insertion of said first elongate body between two or more suture strands, said first elongate body defining said upper perimeter of said body means; and

a second elongate body similar or identical to, but separate from, said first elongate body, said first and second elongate bodies, when used in tandem, being adapted to separate and organize four suture strands or groups of suture strands into four spaced-apart quadrants, said second elongate body defining said lower perimeter of said body means.

42. (New) A suture separation and organization device as defined in claim 29, said passageway or recess passing through the center of said body being substantially cylindrical.

43. (New) A tensioning system for applying variable tension to a plurality of suture strands attached to a soft tissue graft positioned within a bone tunnel and for organizing the suture strands preparatory to fastening the soft tissue graft within the bone tunnel, the tensioning system comprising:

- a graft tensioning device having adjustable tensioning means for selectively varying a tensile load applied to a plurality of suture strands attached to a soft tissue graft positioned within a bone tunnel and that extend away from the bone tunnel; and

- a suture separation and organization device comprising:

- a first elongate body comprising a gripping head at one end and a chiseled end opposite said gripping head that facilitates insertion of said first elongate body between two or more suture strands, said first elongate body defining an upper perimeter of a composite body structure; and

- a second elongate body similar or identical to, but separate from, said first elongate body, said first and second elongate bodies, when used in tandem, being adapted to separate and organize four suture strands or groups of suture strands into four spaced-apart quadrants, said second elongate body defining a lower perimeter of said composite body structure;

- attachment means for removably attaching said body means to said graft tensioning device;

- a first plurality of suture retention recesses or protrusions disposed on an upper perimeter of said body means and a second plurality of retention recesses or protrusions disposed on a lower perimeter of said body means, said first and second pluralities of suture retention recesses or protrusions being adapted to retain a plurality of tensioned suture strands or groups of tensioned suture strands extending away from a bone tunnel in a desired spaced-apart relationship on either side of the bone tunnel in order to facilitate insertion of an interference screw between the tensioned suture strands; and

- a passageway or recess in said body means through which an interference screw can be inserted.